Put a Stop to Shoplifting

- **Alert employees may be your best defense. Have them greet customers when they enter the store.** Teach them to be attentive in a helping way. Make sure that all your employees are familiar with shoplifting laws in your state and establish procedures for them to follow if they suspect shoplifting.
- Make sure you can see everything that goes on in your store. Keep counters low, no more than waist-high. Mount mirrors in corners so there are no blind spots.
- Make it hard to leave your store without paying. Place expensive items in the center of the store, away from exits. Arrange counters and display tables so there's no direct route to the exit. Some stores put turnstiles at entrances to the only way to get out is through the checkout counter.
- Arrange your displays so that missing items are easily noticed. Place small items in neat rows or patterns. If you must, fasten expensive merchandise and attach alarms. Reverse alternate hangers of hanging garments to prevent "grab and run."

Shoplifters Will Be Prosecuted!

- Announce and observe a policy to prosecute shoplifters. The threat of being caught, questioned by police, put on trial and maybe even put in jail, may be enough to turn most shoplifters away. If someone ignores your warning, follow through. An empty threat is meaningless.

Common Shoplifting Methods

- Bulky clothing – coats, pants, maternity outfits – are often used to hide merchandise.
- Packages, bags, knap-sacks and purses are good hiding places.
- Special props include hollowed-out books, fake casts, umbrellas, secret pockets, belts or hooks under coats.
- Folded newspapers or magazines are used to hide small and/or flat items.
- Be aware of customers' hands – and their pockets, purses and handkerchiefs.

What to Watch For

- Notice open packages, purses, shopping bags and knapsacks.
- Watch for customers who are nervous, have wandering eyes, or are loitering.
- Watch for groups of people – especially if one attempts to keep you distracted.

Employees are Not Exempt

Some experts believe that businesses lose more to employee theft than to burglary, robbery and shoplifting combined. Examine your management practices. Make your employees feel that they've got a stake in your business.

Embezzlement & Pilferage

Sometimes employees only take a few items, like office supplies. But embezzlement and pilferage can get a lot bigger. Cashiers may use "short ring ups" – ringing up a lower price on the sales register to cover money they've taken from the cash register. Or they may overcharge other employees and friends.
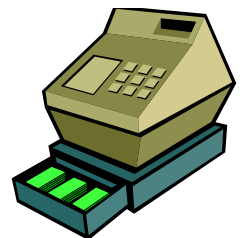
Embezzlement can go from simple overloading of expense accounts, to payments made to non-existent suppliers, to complicated juggling of the company books.

Watch out for these signals of embezzlement:

- Records are rewritten to they'll look "neater."
- Inventory shortages are increasing in size or frequency.
- Employees refuse vacations or promotions.
- Business patterns change when a certain employee is absent.
- Customers complain about errors in monthly statements.
- Collections decline.
- Employees seem sensitive to routine questions about procedures.

Your best defense is frequent and thorough inventory control. Limit employees' access to stock and inventory records. Occasionally check trash bins.

Inventory Control

Conduct periodic, unexpected inventory checks to dishonest employees know they run the risk of being caught by surprise.

Bribery & Kickbacks

Warning Signs to Look Out For:

- Purchasing agents use one supplier despite a company police of rotating suppliers.
- Employees frequently associate with vendors or suppliers.
- Employees receive free tickets for sports events, shows, etc.
- Reputable businesses refuse to submit bids.
- One person has responsibility for issuing and approving bids.

To fight the problem, institute strong policies against accepting gifts, make sure employees require competitive bids, and rotate purchasing agents and suppliers.

Shoplifting and Internal Theft Prevention

POLICE
MESA
ARIZONA

Mesa Police Department
Crime Prevention
www.mesaaz.gov/police